

# Missouri State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

Annual Report  
2007



October 1, 2006 - September 30, 2007

Chairman letter of the State Rehabilitation Council

December 20, 2007

Dear Friends:

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), created by Executive Order 93-01, is responsible for reviewing, analyzing and advising Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB), an agency in the Missouri Division of Family Support (DFS), on its policies and provision of rehabilitation services to Missourians who are blind or visually impaired.

As Chair of the SRC, it is my honor to submit the 2007 Annual Report on the status of these services, in accordance with Section 105(5) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Congress in 1998. During the period of this report, the Council has worked cooperatively in many areas of interest with RSB to improve the range, scope and quality of services for the blind and visually impaired. Our quarterly reviews of agency policies, procedures and operations, along with the public forums held in conjunction with our meetings and our "customer satisfaction survey," have given consumers a very important source of input into the rehabilitation process for Missourians who are blind or visually impaired.

The SRC is dedicated to working with RSB to help blind and visually impaired persons to become self-supporting and fully participating members of our society.

We feel this report provides an informative overview of RSB and the activities of the SRC. We would be pleased to answer any questions about this report, the operations of RSB, or the work of the State Rehabilitation Council.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lawrence Luck SRC Chairman  
State Rehabilitation Council

# **State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind Officers**

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## **Acronym List**

**BEP** – Business Enterprise Program

**CAP** – Corrective Action Plan

**CSAVR** – Council of State Administration of Vocational  
Rehabilitation

**DESE** – Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

**FFY** – Federal Fiscal Year

**FY** – Fiscal Year

**FSD** – Family Support Division

**IPE** – Individualized Plan for Employment

**ITSD** – Information Technology Services Division

**PIP** – Program Improvement Plan

**POB** – Prevention of Blindness

**RCEP** – Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program

**RSA** – Rehabilitation Services Administration

**RSB** – Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

**RT** – Rehabilitation Teacher

**SRC** – State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

**VR** – Vocational Rehabilitation

**VRC** – Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

## **Table of Contents**

### **Section I**

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Services Provided by RSB ..... | 6 |
|--------------------------------|---|

### **Section II**

#### Matters Presented to the Council

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Rehabilitation Services for the Blind Deputy Director ..... | 7  |
| Consumer Satisfaction Surveys .....                         | 7  |
| Public Fora .....   | 8  |
| Recycled Computers .....                                    | 9  |
| Livestock .....   | 9  |
| Electronic Case Management .....                            | 10 |
| Business Network .....                                      | 12 |
| Child Support Call Center .....                             | 12 |
| Shared Vision Summit .....                                  | 13 |
| Business Enterprise Program .....                           | 13 |
| RSA FFY 2006 Comparative Data .....                         | 13 |

### **Section III**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Statistical Analysis of RSB .....                          | 15 |
| Open Cases .....   | 16 |
| Applications .....   | 16 |
| Closure Types .....  | 17 |
| Employment Closures .....                                  | 17 |
| Unsuccessful Closures .....                                | 20 |
| Administrative Reviews/Mediations/Hearings Conducted ..... | 20 |
| Continued Vision for the Future .....                      | 21 |

# **Section I**

## **Services Provided by RSB**

Missouri citizens who are blind and visually impaired work with a rehabilitation team to develop an employment goal and achieve success in employment. This team includes a rehabilitation counselor, and might include a rehabilitation teacher and/or mobility specialist. The role of the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) rehabilitation team is to assist in assessing interest and abilities so a suitable vocational goal can be selected.

Vocational rehabilitation services may include:

- Diagnosis and evaluation
- Physical restoration
- Vocational training, including college
- Continuing education
- Tools and equipment
- Adaptive technology
- Job development
- Job placement
- Post-employment services
- Supported employment
- Instruction in daily living skills, including Braille and travel training
- Community-based rehabilitation services for adjustment to blindness and attainment of alternative skills

## **Section II**

### **Rehabilitation Services for the Blind Deputy Director**

Mike Fester, Deputy Director of Rehabilitation Services for the Blind resigned from his position on July 14, 2007 to work for a private agency. Mark Laird, Assistant Deputy Director, was appointed by the Director of Family Services as the Acting Deputy Director. At the time of this report a permanent Deputy Director has not been appointed.

### **Consumer Satisfaction Surveys**

The SRC has sent Consumer Satisfaction Survey's to individuals who have closed cases with RSB on a quarterly basis. At the time of this report three sets of surveys have been completed.

Consumers are questioned about their level of satisfaction with the services they receive from RSB with one (1) being the lowest level of satisfaction and five (5) being the highest level of satisfaction.

Two different surveys are sent, one to individuals whose cases were closed in competitive employment and one to all individuals whose cases were closed in any other status than competitive employment.

Individuals whose cases were closed in competitive employment had an overall satisfaction of 3.90 out of a possible score of 5.0. Their highest levels of satisfaction fell into the following three categories:

- They had the final say in their selection of a vocational goal.
- Their rehabilitation plan was individualized to meet their goals.
- RSB staff were knowledgeable about their needs as a person who is blind.

Individuals whose cases were closed in any other status than competitive employment had an overall satisfaction of 3.5 out of 5.0. Their highest level of satisfaction fell into the following three categories:

- Their rehabilitation plan was individualized to meet their goals.
- RSB staff returned their phone calls promptly.
- RSB staff were knowledgeable about their needs as a person who is blind.

## **Public Fora**

The SRC has continued to hold public fora throughout the state which allows individuals who are receiving services from RSB to come and voice their praise and concern about the services they have received. This year the Council held public forum in Poplar Bluff (November 2006), Joplin (February 2007), Jefferson City (May 2007) and St. Louis (August 2007).

The Council has been concerned about the low turn out at the public fora and is working on ways to increase turn out. Targeting of individuals who may be able to attend is an area of concern that the Council is looking at as a way to increase attendance.

Some subjects that were discussed at the public fora included:

- Technology effecting employment opportunities
- How RSB staff stays current on technology
- Missouri School for the Blinds new summer program offered to mainstreamed children who are blind or visually impaired.
- Contracts awarded through RSB

## **Recycled Computers**

RSB developed a new program with the Information Technology Services Division (ITSD) within the Department of Social Services to use recycled computers for some RSB consumers. The vision of this program is that the computers will be used by high school students who are in transition plans or for a first time computer user to learn keyboarding and other computer skills. Under this program ITSD will format these computers and install software as requested by RSB for the individual consumer. In order to be eligible for a computer the consumer has to be a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) consumer. As of February 2007, RSB had renegotiated the price of the recycled computers, which can now be purchased for \$55 apiece rather than the original price of \$100. 20 computers have been dispensed with the appropriate software on them. There was one exception since October for a child to get a computer, which was approved.

## **Livestock**

At the February 2007 SRC meeting RSB informed the Council that the new policy for livestock will require a written business plan of 50 to 100 words that addresses the basic issues around the type of business, projected market and pricing structure. RSB will require a feasibility study which addresses basic assumptions of marketability, pricing and conditions of the business. RSB is asking that the feasibility study be done with the University Extension in the consumer's area. A loan-worthy business plan has to be completed with a consultant to address any assumptions that underlie all business plans. These plans will have to be approved by the District Supervisor, the Coordinator of Special Projects and Assistant Deputy Director before the plan is authorized.

## **Electronic Case Management**

At the February 2007 SRC meeting RSB informed the Council that RSB had received approval from DSS to spend \$1.2 million on an electronic case management system for RSB. At the end of February, RSB staff visited Michigan, New Mexico and Idaho to review their case management systems. The purpose of these visits was to help RSB determine the state of the art in electronic case management systems and what type of system would meet RSB's needs. RSB looked at the amount of time the system will save staff so they have more time to be in the field, as well as easing administrative burdens, speeding the paperwork flow and allowing management to obtain usable information for reports from the system. The RFP for this system went out August 21, 2007. There was a pre-bid conference with Office of Administration to answer questions from potential contractors. At the time of this report the contract for the Case Management system has not been awarded.

## **Business Network**

The goal of the Business Network program is to create relationships with national or statewide businesses that will hire persons with disabilities in multiple locations. The Business Network program started at the national level with Council of State Administration of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP) is also working on business networking and an RSB staff member is on this team. RSB developed a database that stores all businesses and employers that VR Counselors make contact with so that all VR Counselors have access to each other's contacts.

## **Child Support Call Center**

The Young-William call center is contracted through Missouri Department of Social Services. This call center is strictly for child

support payment questions. Employees of this call center answer questions from individuals ranging from employers, someone calling to check on their child support check, or individuals getting their wages garnished. RSB hired a rehabilitation engineer to make sure this call center is accessible for blind and visually impaired as far as access issues and visual disabilities. This call center could potentially employ 5 to 10 blind or visually impaired individuals. RSB is looking at having a fully accessible training station that is maintained on a continuing basis.

### **Shared Vision Summit**

The first Shared Vision Summit was held at Missouri School for the Blind in August 2007. At this meeting, more than 20 entities public and private entities and organizations that serve blind or visually impaired clients took part in discussions aimed at improving cooperation, collaboration, and coordination in their services. A second Summit is planned for 2008 to continue the work plan created at this year's event.

### **Business Enterprise Program**

RSB is in the process of having a consultant evaluate the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) to assure that the program and structure is productive, as this is RSB's largest single employment resource for blind and visually impaired clients. A consulting contract was awarded to Terry Smith, Director of Tennessee's combined VR agency, and that agency's former BEP program director. At the time of this report the evaluation was still under way.

### **RSA FFY 2006 Comparative Data**

In FFY 2006 RSA released comparative financial and performance data on state vocational rehabilitation programs. For FFY 2006, ten states had greater funding than RSB. Out of the 26 states that

had a blind rehabilitation agency, RSB ranked fifth in the country by serving a total of 1,429 individuals with 78.10% of those individuals served achieving employment. RSB also ranked fifth in the country for self-employment, with 33 clients placed. RSB ranked fifth in the comparison of average hourly wage of competitive employment closures to the average wage of all employed individuals in the state at 75%. RSB's total funding was \$10,182,898 compared to the largest state's funding (Texas) at \$54,194,059.

RSA released comparative data of the rehabilitation programs in FFY 2006, there were 10 states that had larger funding than Missouri. Out of the 26 states Missouri ranked fifth in the country serving a total of 1,429 individuals with 78.10% of those individuals served achieving employment. Missouri also ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the country for self-employment at 33 individuals. Missouri ranked fifth with the average hourly wage of individuals who achieved competitive employment to the average hourly wage of all employed individuals in the state at 75%. Missouri's total funds used were \$10,182,898 and the largest state's funding was Texas at \$54,194,059.

## **Section III**

### **Status Chart:**

Status 00: Referral  
Status 02: Applicant  
Status 06: Extended Evaluation  
Status 08: Closure from 00, 02, 06  
Status 10: IPE development  
Status 12: IPE completed  
Status 14: Counseling and Guidance Only  
Status 16: Physical and Mental Retardation  
Status 18: Training  
Status 20: Ready for employment  
Status 22: In employment  
Status 24: Service interrupted  
Status 26: Closed, rehabilitated  
Status 28: Closed, before IPE initiated  
Status 30: Closed, before IPE initiated  
Status 32: Post-employment services  
Status 33: Closed, employment maintained  
Status 35: Closed, reopened in 00

### **Statistical Analysis of RSB Operations**

RSB is the designated state unit described in the Vocational Rehabilitation Act as Amended in 1998 for persons with visual disabilities in the State of Missouri. RSB is a section of and reports to the Family Support Division, part of the Division of Social Services. RSB has a total of 117 full time equivalent staff positions (FTEs) in FFY 2007; there were 117 in FFY 2006 also. The following numbers of staff are included in the FTE count:

17 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs)  
17 Rehabilitation Teachers (RT)  
6 Orientation and Mobility Specialists  
7 District Supervisors  
7 Clerical Supervisors  
4 Children's Specialist  
5 Business Enterprise Area Supervisors  
1 Employment Specialist

There are 26 administrative and management staff in various positions at the central office in Jefferson City.

Approximately 10 FTEs are used to provide reader and driver accommodations to staff with disabilities.

All of the positions named above are directly involved in providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities.

## **Open Cases**

There were 1107 open cases in FFY 2007. 517 persons opened new Vocational Rehabilitation cases with RSB at some time during FFY 2007.

## **Applications**

In order to receive vocational rehabilitation services, each consumer must complete an application and undergo eligibility consideration. When an application has been signed, a consumer is considered as being in "02" status. The group that consists of all consumers who apply during a given year is considered to be a good measuring stick against which to compare other case actions, such as successful closures, in order to determine if there are anomalies which affect certain population groups such as women and ethnic minorities.

During FFY2007, a total of 517 persons applied for vocational rehabilitation services; there were 548 in FFY 2006. 271 applicants were male and 246 were female. The youngest applicant was 13 years old and the oldest applicant was 87 years old. The average age of applicants is currently 42 years old, the same as FFY 2006. From application status, cases are moved to either “06 Status” (extended evaluation), “08 Status” (closed before eligibility is established) or “Status 10” (Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)).

## **Closure Types**

RSB categorizes closed cases based on whether or not services have led to employment. In considering whether or not a case has been successful, the type of employment is considered.

Employment of consumers in competitive work (work in an integrated environment which pays at least minimum wage) self-employment or the Business Enterprise Program is considered as targeted employment; or the employment that Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) considers as appropriate for determining an agency’s success or failure. Additionally, there is one other category, which is considered (during this Fiscal Year) as successful closures, but not as targeted closures – employment as homemakers. Each of these is considered successful employment closure; however, the most weight is accorded to closures of the targeted group. All closures which result in employment are referred to as “Status 26” closures.

## **Employment Closures**

### **Successful Closures**

RSB successfully closed 256 cases with consumers who achieved their employment goals during FFY 2007. Included in this total

are 186 competitive employment closures, (the same as FFY 2006), 27 homemakers, (20 in FFY2006), 35 who achieved self-employment, (33 in FFY 2006), and seven who found employment through the Business Enterprise Program, (five in FFY 2006). Total employment success has improved when compared to FFY 2006, when there were 246 closures.

Of the 256 closures, 103 (40%) moved from unemployment at the time of application to employment at the time of closure; this is more than FFY 2005 (67 or 27%). In all, approximately 163 (or 63%) of RSB's closures either resulted in new or more lucrative employment for the consumer. The remaining 37% of closures were cases where vocational rehabilitation services made it possible for the consumer to retain the job they had at the time of application. At the time of application the combined income of individuals who were successfully closed was \$54,900, after services were provided the combined income per week was \$96,300, a 57% increase. The average age of consumers who achieved employment as a result of RSB services is 44; the youngest was 16 years old and the oldest was 87 years old.

### **Cost of Employment Closures**

In achieving the successful employment closure described above, RSB expended \$3,000,164 during FFY 2007 (\$3,044,020 during FFY 2006). This equates to an average cost of \$12,219 per case (\$12,374 in FFY 2006). The lowest cost for a successful employment case was \$0 (the same as in FFY 2006) and the highest cost was \$ 122,141 (\$113,219 in FFY 2006).

### **Income from Employment Closures**

The 256 paid employment closures achieved by RSB consumers during FFY 2007 resulted in weekly earnings of approximately \$96,182 (or an individual average of \$376 per week). On an

annual basis this group would earn \$5,001,481. If a tax rate of 20% existed, this group of consumers would repay the cost of their rehabilitation (\$3,000,164) in a little less than 3 years.

This example of rehabilitation paying for itself does not consider the substantially greater cost savings that result from the decrease in the cost of benefits such as Social Security, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, etc.

## **Homemakers**

27 consumers achieved employment as homemakers in FFY 2007; there were 20 in FFY 2006. The youngest consumer was 21 years old (29 in FFY 2006) and the oldest consumer was 79 years old (76 in FFY 2006). The average age of Homemaker consumers was 48 years old (47 in FFY 2006).

RSB spent \$125,437 on 27 homemaker closures during FFY 2007. The least expensive case cost \$21 and the most expensive case cost \$37,929.

## **Post-Employment**

Once the consumer has been employed for a minimum of 90 days, and all services required by the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) have been delivered, the case can be successfully closed. However, many cases require services of an ongoing nature to retain employment or adjust to new employment. For those cases, RSB can reopen the case for “post-employment services”. Under post-employment services, RSB can provide for service needs which are discovered after employment has begun, or that arise as employment continues. These services are limited to those which can be provided under the existing IPE. If the employment cannot be maintained and a new IPE is necessary, the case must be closed and a new case opened.

In FFY 2007, 37 cases were opened for post-employment services. 56 cases that had been opened in post-employment were closed during FFY 2007 as having successfully retained employment.

## **Unsuccessful Closures**

### **Cases Closed Prior to Eligibility**

Status 08 closures occur when consumers apply for services but their cases are closed prior to their achieving eligibility. During FFY 2007, 130 cases were closed in this status (85 in FFY 2006). Some frequently occurring reasons for this type of closure are: no disabling condition, refusal of services or further services and death

### **Cases Closed After Individualized Plan for Employment Initiated**

Status 28 closures are those cases which are closed after Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) services have been delivered, but in which employment was not achieved. These cases are of particular interest to the SRC because they often occur after the expenditure of significant resources. In FFY 2007 RSB recorded 83 Status 28 closures and spent \$863,318 on these case closures. The lowest case cost \$0 and the highest case cost \$58,902. Some frequently occurring reasons for this type of closure are: unable to locate, refusal of services or further services, and death.

### **Administrative Reviews/Mediations/Hearings Conducted**

RSB has no Administrative Reviews or hearings. There was one mediation performed by RSB.

## **Continued Vision for the Future**

RSB's mission is the creation of opportunities for the personal and vocational success of blind and visually impaired consumers. The SRC continues to work cooperatively with RSB to improve the services offered to meet what we consider to be the unique rehabilitation needs of consumers with visual disabilities. We believe in the abilities of persons who are blind and visually impaired. Finally, the SRC believes that with the proper training, alternative skills and assistive technology that are provided through a specialized program for persons with visual disabilities, individuals who are blind can be vocationally, socially and economically competitive.